

SANDPIPER



A newsletter for VIPs. Sandy Hook/Gateway National Recreation Area
Editor: Norma Kay

November 2005

MICHAEL'S COLUMN

By: Michael Thomas, VIP Coordinator

Our new volunteer year officially started on October 1. Last year was a great year with Sandy Hook volunteers contributing 13,580 hours. This is the equivalent of having almost 7 extra full time employees working at Sandy Hook. Without you, the volunteer, we would not be able to present near as many interpretive programs, opening the Sandy Hook Lighthouse, Battery Potter, History House, Battery Gunnison and the Fort Hancock Nike Missile Radar Site.

Numerous groups do cleanups on the beaches or plant dune grass. Many dedicated volunteers help with the Endangered Species Nesting Program. Birds such as Piping Plovers struggle in the hostile environment of hot beaches, predators and storms. These fragile birds could disappear from New Jersey shores if it wasn't for you the volunteer. Our Natural Resources staff can do a much better job having you to support their activities.

Your support is direly needed in times where the park budget cannot provide for extra bodies to conduct our mission. All of us here at Sandy Hook thank you for your dedication and for sharing your time and talents. We look forward to this year with eager anticipation.

The Annual Volunteer Appreciation Reception will be held at History House on Saturday, December 10th, 10 a.m. to noon. Please join us to recognize outstanding contributions by our volunteers. We will send and additional invitation to remind you but, it wouldn't hurt to put it on your calendars now.

If you have any comments or questions about the Sandpiper or wish to write an article about your volunteering experiences, call me, Michael Thomas, at 732-872-5959 or e-mail me at mike_thomas@nps.gov.

CHRISTMAS AT HISTORY HOUSE

By: Connie Witherby

Each year, Officer Row House # 1, also known as History House, is decorated for the holidays as it might have looked during World War II, the busiest years of Fort Hancock as an active military garrison.

Park Staff and volunteers put up a 9 foot tree, and decorate it with dozens of Christmas ornaments that date from the 1930's and early 1940's. Christmas presents from the 1940's are scattered under the tree, and a loaned circa 1930 Lionel Train occasionally chugs around the base of the tree.

Garland is strung from the picture moldings and donated holly is used to decorate the fireplace



mantels. A Christmas wreath adorns the front door. When visitors come to visit, they smell mulled cider, which will warm them on a cold winter day. For many, nostalgia brings back memories of their childhood Christmas traditions.

History House is open on weekends from 1 pm to 5 pm. We also have a special Evening

program, scheduled this year for Saturday, December 10th from 6 pm to 8 pm. We will have musicians playing Christmas carols, and mulled cider, coffee, cake and cookies are served to our visitors. This program has become a tradition with many of our visitors returning each year to get into the holiday spirit.

DECORATE HISTORY HOUSE

Sandy Hook Volunteers are invited to join the Sandy Hook interpretive staff on Sunday, December 4th to help decorate History House for the holidays. We will begin at 9 a.m. and be done by 5 p.m. We will be putting up the first floor decorations, and assembling and trimming the tree with antique ornaments. Normally, we have two weekend days to decorate the house, and are finished by Sunday afternoon. However, this year, we must do it all on the one day. We will have coffee, cider and cookies to munch on. If you'd like to spend the day, bring your lunch. Let Connie Witherby know if you plan to help out that day. You can e-mail her at Constance_Witherby@nps.gov or call her office at 732-872-5949.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to transcribe oral history interviews with Fort Hancock veterans. This is an at home project. All you need is a computer with Microsoft Word and a CD player. If you are interested in learning more about life at Fort Hancock, then this is a project for you. Contact Mary Rasa at (732) 872-5953 or mary_rasa@nps.gov for more information.

FORT HANCOCK ESTABLISHMENT DAY

By: Thomas Hoffman, Park Historian

This year's annual Fort Hancock Establishment Day event held Sunday, October 30, 2005, commemorated the 110th anniversary of the date when the fort was officially named. On October 30, 1895, the Adjutant General's Office, U.S. Army Headquarters, in Washington, D.C., received General Order No. 57 from the War Department, stating that "By direction of the President, the fortifications at Sandy Hook, New Jersey, will hereafter be known and designated as Fort Hancock, in honor of the late Major-General Winfield Scott Hancock, United States Army."

The Civil War had made General Hancock a national war hero, and he almost became president of the United States, being narrowly defeated in the presidential election of 1880 by James A. Garfield, a former Union army general who had also served with distinction during the war. General Hancock's namesake fort would have a long service life, and would defend New

York Harbor from both sea and air attack from the Spanish-American War Era, well into the modern missile era until it closed in 1974.



Members of the U.S. Army Ground Forces Association dressed in WWII uniforms on one of the 6" guns of Battery Gunnison.

This year, the weather was mild and sunny, so there was a good turn out of visitors who came to take part in a number of interpretive activities.

These included tours of the Nike Missile Radar Site, Sandy Hook Lighthouse and Battery Potter, all presented by park volunteers, and ranger-led walking tours of two of the fort's gun batteries. Fort buildings open to the public included History House on Officers Row, the Fort Hancock Museum, and the NJ Audubon Society bird observatory building.

Adding "living history" to the event were American Revolution, Mexican War, Civil War, and WWII re-enactors, who displayed their equipment and tents on the main parade ground to visitors. Also, 15 U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps re-enactors from the U.S. Army Ground Forces Association, kept Battery Gunnison open to visitors on both Saturday and Sunday. Led by Mike Murray, Jon Prostack, and Shawn Welch, they hosted many visitors and explained the workings of the battery's plotting room,

magazine rooms, and the Model 1900 6-inch gun on the battery's north gun emplacement. Joining the regular re-enactors at Gunnison this year were 3 others who traveled all the way from Fort MacArthur Museum, located in a harbor defense fort that once protected Los Angeles, California. All of the Gunnison re-enactors had a good time at Fort Hancock over the weekend, and they had such a good time many of them even stayed overnite Sunday, and left, rather reluctantly, on Monday morning to return home, some of which were located in Oklahoma and Georgia! May next year's Fort Hancock Establishment day be bigger and better than ever!

Visit their website at:

http://andy_bennett.home.mindspring.com/agfa/index.html

HOLIDAY EVENTS

A 1940s Fort Hancock Christmas

Saturdays, December 10 and 17, & Sundays, December 11 & 18, 1 pm to 5 pm

Visit History House, an officer's house decorated for the Holidays as it may have been during the 1940s.

An Evening in the 1940s

Saturday, December 10, 6 pm to 8 pm

History House, an officer's house, is decorated for the Holidays as it may have been during the 1940s. This evening program highlights the ambiance of the house, and includes refreshments and live music.

Christmas Holly Forest Walk

Sandy Hook Visitor Center

Saturdays, December 10 and 17, at 2 pm

Explore the holly forest and discover the "holly" of Christmas. **Christmas Open House**

New Years Day Walk

"Round the Hook"

Building 18, Fort Hancock

Sunday, January 1 at 11 am

Welcome the New Year on this annual walk sponsored by the American Littoral Society. For more information, call 732-291-0055.

SAFETY FIRST: Home Fire Safety Tips for Fall

Check Your Detectors: Spring forward, fall back, and check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. This is the time to change the battery in your detectors. Developing this habit is a good way to remember a simple task that can save your life.

Space Heaters: Space heaters need space, too. As the weather gets cooler, space heaters come out of their summer hiding places. Remember to leave at least 3 feet of space around your heater. Unplug it when not in use.

Clean Your Chimney and Inspect your Furnace: Make a clean sweep for autumn. Give your fireplace a fall cleaning. Call your local chimney sweep and have your spark arrester checked and your chimney inspected for soot build-up. Have your furnace checked and cleaned as well. A good running furnace is safer and saves you money.

SANDY HOOK VOLUNTEER CONTACTS

- Organized Youth Group Activities (Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, etc.):
Jeanne McArthur-Heuser: 732-872-5936
- Beach Cleanup, Dune Grass Planting: Bruce Lane 732-872-5931
- Endangered Species Monitoring: Jeanne McArthur-Heuser: 732-872-5936
- Interpretive Activities (tour guides, visitor assistants): Connie Witherby 732-872-5949
- Maintenance Activities (electrician, plumber, carpenter, etc.): Michael Thomas 732-872-5959
- Cultural Resource Activities (curatorial, internships, gun battery cleanups, etc.):
Mary Rasa 732-872-5953
- Administration (filing, office management): Michael Thomas 732-872-5959
- Volunteerism in other Gateway Units: Marisol Soto 718-354-4564
- Sandy Hook Park Partners:
 - Sandy Hook Foundation: Betsy Barrett 732-291-7733
 - New Jersey Lighthouse Society: Tom Lavery 732-872-1814
 - Clean Ocean Action: Kari Jermansen 732-872-0111
 - New Jersey Audubon/ Sandy Hook Bird Observatory: 732-872-2500
 - Monmouth County Audubon: 732-872-2473
 - Army Ground Forces Association: Mike Murray: 201-444-2024

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National Park Service
Sandy Hook
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.